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ABSTRACT

For this report, the first of a series, the National School Desegregation Research Project obtained federal data for the 1984-85 school year, which show a substantial change in the racial composition of American's public schools since 1968, when data were first collected. The white majority is shrinking, due to a large decline in fertility and a small shift to private schools. Concurrently, the Hispanic, Asian and American Indian enrollments are growing very rapidly, due to higher fertility levels and large-scale immigration. The proportion of Black students is growing most substantially in the old industrial belt of the north, not in the south. The west now has almost as high a proportion of minority enrollment as has the south. The United States is becoming a much more multiracial society in which problems of equal education and race relations within schools and other central institutions will be even more critical than they have been in the past. The statistics foretell a changing society, with large majorities of "minorities" in public schools. Groups that have traditionally been less successful in public education and have been the targets of discrimination will be larger and larger fractions of the school population. (PS)

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NATIONAL SCHOOL DESEGREGATION PROJECT
The University of Chicago

WORKING PAPERS

PAPER NO. 1

Racial Change in U. S. School Enrollments, 1968-1984

Supported by a Grant from the Spencer Foundation.

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RACIAL CHANGE IN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

1968 - 1984

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with the assistance of

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Prepared for the National Conference on

School Desegregation Research

September 5, 1986

RACIAL CHANGE IN AMERICAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1968-1984

Gary Orfield
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The federal government has not yet officially released any data on the racial enrollments of American public education since 1980. Federal data for the 1984-85 school year, obtained by the National School Desegregation Research Project, shows that there has been a substantial change in the racial composition of American public schools since national racial data was first collected in 1968. The new data shows that the white majority is shrinking and that Hispanic, Asian and American Indian enrollments are growing very rapidly. It shows that the proportion of black students is growing most substantially in the old industrial belt of the North, not in the South and that the West now has almost a high a fraction of minority enrollment as the South. The trends are all the more clearcut in several states which either have now or soon may have majorities of "minorities" in their total statewide enrollments. The data clearly show that we are becoming a much more multiracial society in which problems of equal education and race relations within schools and other central institutions will be even more critical than they have in the past.

During the sixteen year period between fall 1968 and fall 1984 there was a sharp drop in white school enrollment, reflecting a steep decline in birth rates and a small shift to private education. At the same time there was very little change in black enrollment

but extremely rapid increases in students from Asian, Indian and Hispanic backgrounds, reflecting both higher fertility and large-scale immigration. The black fraction of the nation's total enrollment increased modestly from 14.5% to 16.2. The Hispanic proportion almost doubled, from 4.6% to 9.1%. The remaining group of students, Asians and American Indians increased from less than 1 percent to 3.4% of the nation's enrollment By 1984, white enrollment was down to 71.3% of the national total.(see table 1).

Table 1

PERCENT OF NATIONAL ENROLLMENT BY RACE, 1968-1984

	1968	1970	1980	1984
Black	14.5	15.0	16.1	16.2
Hispanic	4.6	5.1	8.0	9.1
Indian & Asian	.9	.9	2.7	3.4
White	80.0	79.0	73.2	71.3

The decline in the white fraction of the nation's students was not produced by any significant increase in black students. Table 2 reflects instead the dramatic drop in white enrollment and static number of blacks.

Table 2

NATIONAL ENROLLMENT BY RACE, 1968-1984

	1968	1970	1980	1984	Change 1968-84
Black	6282173	6707411	6417433	6388670	+1.7%
Hispanic	2002776	2275403	3178771	3598511	+79.7%
Asian	194022*	209092*	748923	994108	+412.4%
Indian	177464	197109	305643	364313	+105.2%
White	34697133	35482656	29162352	28106295	-19.0%
TOTAL	43353568	44875543	39813122	39451897	- 9.0%

*no racial survey data is available from Hawaii for these years. In 1980 the enrollment in Hawaii was 71% Asian and Hawaii provided 15.5% of the total Asian enrollment in the U.S., approximately 116,000 students. Had Hawaiian enrollment been included, Asian enrollment would still be the most rapidly growing but the growth rate would be significantly less.

Table 2 shows that the nation's overall public school enrollment has changed relatively slowly , increasing into the 1970s and dropping 9% from its 1968 level by 1984. The 3.9 million drop, however, masks much more rapid changes among various groups in the population. White enrollment fell 6.6 million while minority enrollment grew 2.7 million. There were almost a fifth less white students in public schools. Black enrollment was almost unchanged for the period, growing only .1 million. The dramatic growth was among Hispanics, increasing 1.6 million, or almost 80%. Asians and Indians grew even faster, but from much smaller base numbers. Should the existing rates of racial population

change continue during the next sixteen years as they did from 1968-84, the year 2000 could find Hispanics as the largest minority in American schools and whites with little more than half the total enrollment. (These trends could, of course, be either slowed or accelerated by many forces both within and outside American society.)

Areas with Largest Minority Enrollments

The school statistics show that the U.S. is becoming a society with a much smaller white majority. There has been a substantial change since 1968 and the birth statistics show that the change is likely to continue because of the older age and very low fertility of white adults. As the trend develops across the country its effects will be far more dramatic in some regions. The 1984 school statistics show, for instance, that seven states and the District of Columbia had fewer than 60% white students.

Table 3

Percent White Students in Selected States and Washington, D.C., 1968-1984 *

State	1968% White	1984 % White	Change
Dist. of Columbia	5.6	3.8	-1.8
Hawaii	NA	23.1	NA
New Mexico	52.4	44.9	-7.5
Mississippi	50.8	49.3	-1.5
California	74.2	52.0	-22.2
Louisiana	60.8	55.5	- 5.3
Texas	64.4	56.6	- 7.8
South Carolina	60.4	53.6	- 6.8

*see appendix for discussion of the sources of the statewide racial data and their limitations

The table reflects the increasing diversity of the American racial distribution and the fact that the non-black minorities are growing much more rapidly. Blacks were the largest minority in only four of these states, only one of which experienced a substantial drop in percent white. There was little change in the Deep South. Hispanics are the leading minority group in the two largest states on the list, California and Texas. Asians, who make up the large majority of Hawaii's public school students, are growing very rapidly as a fraction of the California schools. If the trend of racial change continues a number of our states will face a situation previously seen only in Hawaii--large majorities of "minorities" in the public schools across the entire state. In contrast to Hawaii, however, the majority will not be comprised of highly successful Asian communities but will be drawn mostly from much more disadvantaged black and Hispanic students. In many states there will be at least two important non-wnite groups, each with unique circumstances and problems requiring attention of educational leaders.

Changes in Regional Minority Enrollments

Throughout American history the problem of minority education has been,to a large extent, a southern problem. The majority of blacks and black students have always lived in the South and until World War II many states had few black residents. The Northwest and New England have still been largely isolated from the streams of black migration. Hispanics have always been highly concentrated in the states of the Southwest and there was very little attention to their educational needs elsewhere until the last two decades.

The new data shows important changes in the regional distribution of blacks but a continuing high degree of concentration among Hispanics. Since the 1960s there has been no growth in the percent of black students in the schools of the South. The schools of the South were 26.6 percent black in 1968 and 26.1 percent black sixteen years later. This slight gain in percent of non-black students occurred in striking contrast to the many predictions that the massive desegregation orders of the 1970's, which produced a sharp decline in segregation and an increase in the percent of blacks in predominantly white schools, would lead to white abandonment of public education. The schools of the South have been far more integrated than those of other regions since 1970 and many of the South's busing orders were 12 or 13 years old by 1984. The southern schools were, of course, influenced by powerful external forces, as whites, blacks and Hispanics all showed net immigration into the economically growing Sunbelt by the mid-1970s. This growth meant that southern schools continued to gain students after

northern schools began a period of rapid decline.

Black students are becoming more equally distributed among the regions of the country. Between 1968 and 1984, the proportion of black students rose most in the Northeast and Midwest. The South was the only region where the fraction of black students fell. (see table 4). By 1984 both the Northeast and Midwest were approaching the national average for black students and only the West lagged seriously behind. In contrast to the descriptions of white desertion of public schools following the implementation of desegregation orders that produced far more desegregation in the South than the North, the region actually experienced the smallest drop in the percent white in its public schools. The most segregated areas had the largest increase in the proportion of blacks. Both trends were, however, much more the product of large inter-regional migrations than of any white reaction to school composition. The large white migration from the North and the large Hispanic migration into portions of the South overshawdowed the smaller black migration to the region and helped explain rapidly dropping white numbers in northern schools.

Hispanic students remained highly concentrated in a few states, in contrast to the black situation. California and Texas accounted for 60.5% of all U.S. Hispanic students in 1984. Another 20.5% were in the schools of New York, Illinois, Florida and New Mexico. Although all regions had a rising percentage of Hispanic students, the large numbers

Table 4

Regional Changes in White, Black and Hispanic % Enrollment, 1968-84

	whites		blacks		Hispanics	
	1968	1984	1968	1984	1968	1984
NORTHEAST	84.6	76.1	11.3	14.1	3.7	7.6
MIDWEST	87.9	82.4	10.3	13.0	1.3	2.3
BORDER	81.9	76.9	17.1	18.8	.2	1.0
SOUTH	67.9	63.4	26.6	26.1	5.1	9.0
WEST	79.1	64.4	6.1	6.9	12.1	21.1
U.S. TOTAL	80.0	71.3	14.5	16.2	4.6	9.1

were regionally focused. By 1984, the West had 21% Hispanic students and was moving rapidly toward a time when its Hispanic enrollment would be as high a fraction of the total as the black enrollment of the South. The West and the South had the smallest white majorities of the regions, 64% and 63%, respectively. Although only 7% of the West's students were black, this prosperous and fast-growing region already confronted a challenge of minority education larger than that which any area outside the South had ever faced. Although part of the West's minority population was accounted for by relatively successful Asian students, the region's continuing rapid growth in Hispanic population and the fact that many school districts faced not one but two large and different disadvantaged minorities, underlined the urgency of the problem.

Summary and Future Reports. The new school data from the mid-1980s shows that whether or not concerns about minority education are on the political agenda, demographic forces are making those concerns ever more important to those running American education. The enrollment statistics since the late 1960s do not foretell a stable society with limited problems of adaptation and adjustment. They reflect a changing society in which groups who have traditionally been less successful in public education and who have been the targets of many forms of discrimination will be larger and larger fractions of our school population. Policy makers, educators, and researchers need to carefully describe the situation of these

new students and their communities and to examine ways to help the schools serve a different and far more diverse population of young Americans.

This is the first of several reports on racial change in public schools that will be produced by the National School Desegregation Research Project. The Project, funded by a Spencer Foundation grant to the University of Chicago, will produce studies of racial changes in the schools of the individual states and large cities. It will also produce analyses of the changes in the levels of segregation and integration for blacks, Hispanics, and whites during the 1980s at the national, regional, state, and metropolitan levels. These results will help to assess whether or not school districts with growing minority populations are operating increasingly segregated schools or are moving toward greater integration. If there has been any impact of the Reagan Administration's opposition to urban desegregation orders on school segregation levels, there should be some sign of it in the data that will be analyzed for this project by scholars at the University of Wisconsin and elsewhere. Further reports will be issued as working papers in this series.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

The statistics reported here for the 1984-85 school year are based on data collected by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and reported to the Department of Education by its contractors, DBS Corporation and Opportunity Systems Inc. The OCR survey does not collect data from all school districts but collects information each two years from a sample of districts selected in a way that state, regional, and national totals may be statistically projected. This projected data is the only national source of statistics on racial composition of schools in states and regions except for the Census. The statistical projections may, of course, differ from the exact state-wide figures that can be obtained if all districts within a given state actually report racial data. Readers interested in particular states may wish to contact to statistics offices in the state departments of education to determine whether more complete data was collected and whether it can be released.

1968-69 statistics used in this report come from the official Federal report on the 1968 survey released by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, January 4, 1970. For an analysis of earlier trends and the regional desegregation statistics referred to in the report, see: G. Orfield, Public School Desegregation in the United States, 1968-1980 (Washington, 1983).

The regions used for analysis in this working paper are defined as follows:

SOUTH:	Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia
BORDER:	Delaware, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, West Virginia
NORTHEAST:	Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont
MIDWEST:	Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin
WEST:	Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

Note: Hawaii and Alaska are excluded because of their unique ethnic compositions and distance from other states assigned to regions.